

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
Aitkin, Minnesota
June 19, 2022
2nd Sunday after Pentecost
ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP

P In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

Introit

Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come;*

you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my | fortress.

You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive | me again;*

from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.

You will increase my | greatness*
and comfort | me again.

I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, | O my God;*

I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of | Israel.

My lips will shout for joy, when I sing prais- | es to you;*

my soul also, which you | have redeemed.

And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all | the day long,*

for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to | do me hurt.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;**

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may contin- | ually come;*

you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my | fortress.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

Proper 7 (Year C)

P Let us pray.

O God, You have prepared for those who love You such good things as surpass our understanding. Cast out all sins and evil desires from us, and pour into our hearts Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all blessedness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 65:1–9

I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me;

I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me.

I said, "Here am I, here am I,"

to a nation that was not called by my name.

I spread out my hands all the day

to a rebellious people,

who walk in a way that is not good,

following their own devices;

a people who provoke me

to my face continually,

sacrificing in gardens

and making offerings on bricks;

who sit in tombs,

and spend the night in secret places;

who eat pig's flesh,

and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;

who say, "Keep to yourself,

do not come near me, for I am too holy for you."

These are a smoke in my nostrils,
a fire that burns all the day.
Behold, it is written before me:
“I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will indeed repay into their bosom
both your iniquities and your fathers’ iniquities
together,
says the LORD;
because they made offerings on the mountains
and insulted me on the hills,
I will measure into their bosom
payment for their former deeds.”

Thus says the LORD:
“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, ‘Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,’
so I will do for my servants’ sake,
and not destroy them all.
I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,
and from Judah possessors of my mountains;
my chosen shall possess it,
and my servants shall dwell there.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle

Galatians 3:23—4:70

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a

guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel

Luke 8:26–39

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do

with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming

throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

Apostles' Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

**From thence He will come to judge the living and the
dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Sermon Text – Luke 8:26-39

Theme – The Destroyer Disarmed and Defeated

The book *Hell from the Heavens* (by John Wukovits, Boston: Da Capo Press, 2015), tells the story of the largest single-ship kamikaze attack of World War II. The date was April 16, 1945. It happened during the battle of Okinawa. The ship that was attacked was the *USS Laffey*. This destroyer had been involved in three previous assaults. The crew had seen combat before, but nothing like this. For

eighty minutes the ship was attacked by no fewer than twenty-two suicide aircraft. The ship sustained significant damage, but it was not destroyed.

In our text for today, we hear about another battle that involved a destroyer. The only thing is the destroyer is not a ship, but is the Evil One, the Devil. The scene of this battle is along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus gets out of a boat on the east side of that Sea. He is in the country of the Geransenes. It was pagan territory. It was a place where demons roamed. And so, we read, **“When Jesus had stepped out on the land, there met him a man from the city who had demons”** (Luke 8:27a).

This guy was in rough shape. A few years back we would have called him a “streaker;” and this “streaker” liked to hang out with skeletons. I say that because we are told that he didn’t wear clothes and that he lived in the tombs (Luke 8:27b). This man’s family and friends had tried to help him, but he refused their help and ran away.

As Jesus and His disciples get out of the boat, they are face-to-face with this demon possessed man. It was a scary situation. The man’s name was “Legion.” Luke explains that is because the man was possessed by so many demons. A Roman legion usually numbered somewhere around six thousand. Can you imagine the damage that thousands of demons were inflicting on this poor man?

While Jesus was outnumbered, He was not overmatched. The battle was over even before it started. The demons knew that; that’s why the demons were begging Jesus not to send them into the abyss; we would call the abyss “hell.” For some reason Jesus does what they asked him to do and sent them into a herd of pigs. And, we are told that **“The herd rushed down the steep back into the lake and drowned”** (Luke 8:33). They were sunk, literally.

The demons did to those pigs what those kamikaze pilots were unable to do to the *USS Laffey*.

But the story isn't over. That poor demon possessed man is freed. There he is **“sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind”** (Luke 8:35). In those days that is what the disciple of a rabbi would do. This man wanted to stay with Jesus. What does Jesus tell him to do? He tells him to **“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you”** (Luke 8:39).

This account, like that of the account of the repeated attacks on the *USS Laffey*, is a story of warfare. The Bible talks about how our struggle is a struggle **“against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 6:12).

Remember how earlier I said that the Devil was a “destroyer?” I say that because in John chapter 10, verse 10, Jesus is talking about the Devil when says that he **“comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”** Also in Revelation 9:11, the devil is called the **“angel of the bottomless pit.”** That's the aforementioned abyss. At Revelation 9:11 the Devil is also called **“Apollyon,”** which can be translated as “the destroyer.” The point is The Devil and his evil angels have one goal and that goal is to destroy.

Think of the destruction that he had brought onto the man who was demon possessed. They destroyed his dignity as he was naked and living amongst the dead. They destroyed his relationships as he was living alone. And when they were cast into that herd of pigs, what did they do? They destroyed them.

To this day we see the Devil's destructive work being done in the lives of others and in our own lives. The Devil is at work destroying marriages, destroying relationships, destroying livelihoods, destroying churches, destroying the health and well-being of people. It is one assault after another. Sometimes our lives

feel like that crew of the *USS Laffey* felt as we endure on attack after another.

That's when we need to cling to the Gospel. The Gospel tells us plainly that Jesus came **"to destroy the works of the devil"** (1 John 3:8). While it is true that Devil is a destroyer, the Gospel of Jesus proclaims to us that he has been disarmed and defeated at the cross.

At Colossians 2:15 it says that Jesus has **"disarmed"** the powers of evil. In fact, it says that He **"put them to open shame, by triumphing over them."** That is true because Jesus died for our sin and rose again. And so we can cling to Jesus knowing that He has destroyed the Devil's power and He will deliver us from the ultimate destruction that the Devil desires to inflict upon us, the destruction of hell.

And what does Jesus want us to do? He wants us to do what Jesus told that man who had been demon possessed to do. He wants us to return home and tell others what God has done for us.

An example of this is a woman named "Stacy." As a teenager she got deep into drugs and other risky behaviors. Yet, over time, Jesus had His way in her heart. He cast out her demons and she came back to the Church, back to the promises of her baptism, back to the truths of the Bible. And, even though she had burned a lot of bridges in her community and hurt many who were closest to her, she was compelled to go home **"and declare how much God had done for"** her.

Now she is working part time for a church. Besides that she is working for an agency that provides counsel and support to those dealing with addiction and other mental health challenges. The local police, with whom, at one time, she had regular run-ins, are now her biggest advocates. And, at every opportunity she tells her story. It is a story of the hell she went through. It is the story of who God wanted to give her heaven through Jesus.

That is a story we can tell. It is an even better story than the one told in the book: *Hell from the Heavens* for it is the story of how Jesus has delivered us from the destroyer that we call “The Devil.” AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

O King of kings and Lord of lords, You call out to every nation of the earth seeking repentance and justice, even as they rebel against Your will. Work repentance in all civil leaders. Use them to defend the weak and to punish the guilty, that the Church may have free course to preach the Gospel.

Gracious God, Your Son sent the man formerly possessed by demons to declare how much God had done for him. May Your Church also, rescued from the snares of the devil, proclaim how much Jesus has done for us.

Compassionate Father, from whom all fatherhood is named, we give You thanks for earthly fathers. Give them confidence in their station and zeal for their task to care for their families faithfully. Make them examples to their children of godly life and love of Your Word. Bless their work of bringing up children in the fear and instruction of the Lord, and give them the comfort of Your absolution over all their shortcomings.

Almighty God, You have established governments and institutions for good order and our well-being. Guide and grant wisdom to leaders and citizens. Give peace, security and good laws to our own country, our cities and our communities.

O Lord, Your Son, Jesus, had pity on the man afflicted with an abundance of demons. Have mercy now on the afflictions that beset [_____ and] all for whom we pray. Give them healing, strength and an increase of faith.

Dear Father, You know the condition of our souls, that we frequently wander into sins, vice and danger. Hear our prayers for the sake of Christ, who defeated legions of demons so that we might receive adoption as sons; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

**C Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Benediction

**P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you
peace.**

C Amen

Acknowledgments

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